



TEACHERS' NOTES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Upper primary and lower secondary
Ages 10–13; years 5 to 8)

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English, Humanities and Social Sciences
- **General capabilities:** Literacy, Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capability, Ethical Understanding

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Examining the conventions of mystery fiction
- Analysing how language and writing evoke mood, tone and tension
- Discussing moral and ethical dilemmas
- Encouraging critical thinking
- Encouraging creative and imaginative writing

THEMES

- Self-perception
- Inheritance: of heirlooms and deeds done
- Family
- Ethical dilemmas
- Truth and justice: taking responsibility
- Time and change: time passing and past cultures
- Rural vs city communities

PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia and Fleur Ferris

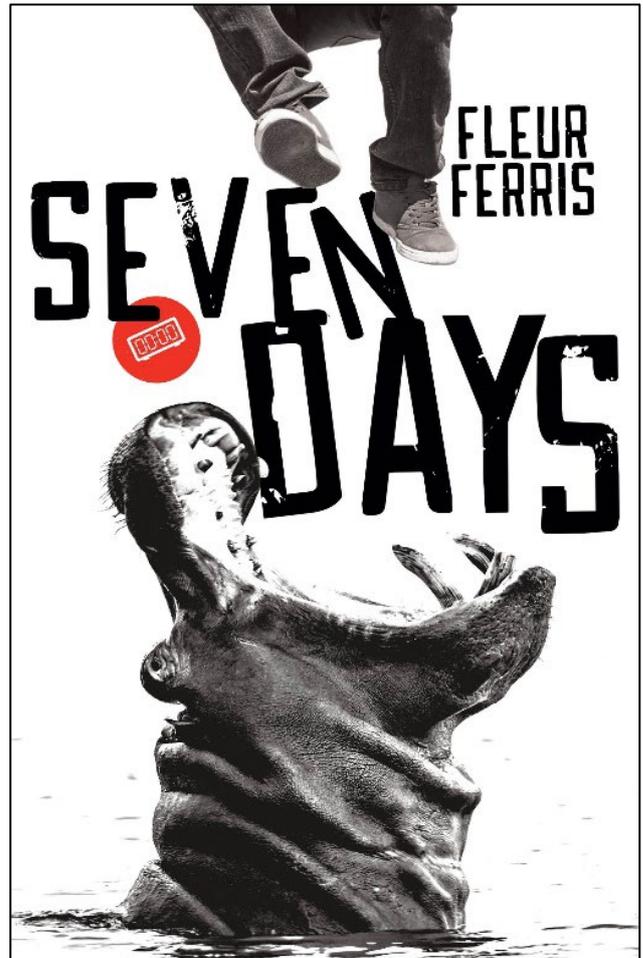
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Seven Days Fleur Ferris

PLOT SUMMARY

A fast-paced, action-packed story of how the past catches up to us, from bestselling and award-winning author Fleur Ferris.

When Ben is dumped with his country relatives for the holidays, he starts counting down the days until it's over, hating every second.

But Ben's stay takes a sharp turn when he comes across his great-great grandfather's journal – the final entry being from one hundred years ago, right after he was shot.

With his cousin, Josh, Ben starts unravelling mysteries, lies and shocking crimes. Can the two boys beat the odds to resolve a century of bad blood between two families?

A dangerous treasure hunt could hold the answers – or it could be a journey from which there is no return . . .

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fleur Ferris spent the first seventeen years of her life growing up on a farm in Patchewollock, northwest Victoria. She then moved twenty times in twenty years.

During this time, Fleur sometimes saw the darker side to life while working for a number of years as a police officer and a paramedic.

She now lives a more settled lifestyle in Moama, southern New South Wales, with her husband and three children.

Fleur's colourful and diverse background has given her a unique insight into today's society and an endless pool of experiences to draw from. When she isn't weaving this through her latest story, reading or spending time with her family, you will find her with friends, talking about art, books and travel.

Fleur's first YA novel, *Risk*, won the Australian Family Therapists' Award for Children's Literature, the Sisters in Crime Davitt Awards for Best Young Adult Novel and Best Debut Book 2016, as well as a YABBA in 2017. She has also written *Black, Wreck* and *Found* for young adults. *Nullaboo Hullabaloo* and *Seven Days* are Fleur's novels for younger readers.

Visit Fleur's website at fleurferris.com.



INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR

What was your inspiration for writing *Seven Days*?

The setting is inspired by my personal experience of living in Mansfield, Victoria. The vivid green fields, the majestic red gum trees, the magnificent mountains, dark and moody against the bright blue sky, the wide open streetscape, the cafes, wine bars, art galleries, all of which creates a relaxed modern feel and together makes the perfect backdrop for this story.

The backstory is drawn from Mansfield's dark crime history – in the street is a statue of a policeman who was shot and killed by outlaw Ned Kelly in the 1870s. Ned Kelly led the infamous Kelly gang through the region before he was caught, convicted of murder and sentenced to death by hanging.

The feud is drawn from two blood-related families I once knew of, who hated each other. After a feud decades ago, the hatred filtered down from grandparents to parents to the kids, and the kids adopted it, but had no real idea why it was so. The kids were born into it and were raised to carry on the hate.

When I was growing up I adopted my family's views and attitudes, and it wasn't until a confronting incident occurred that I stopped and analysed my beliefs and the part history played in shaping my life. Out of this incident, ongoing research, reflection and thoughts, combined with the above, came the idea for this element of the story.

The treasure hunt in the story ends in the lions' enclosure at a zoo inspired by the Mansfield Open Plain Zoo – a zoo I have visited many times. On one occasion I camped in a swag at the edge of the lagoon, terrified by calls of the night animals, and the deep giant roar of the lions, so close and only kept away from us by wire. I realised it was the perfect setting for a terrifying tale. The zoo is situated in a paddock, land that was once cleared for cropping, a historical fact that inspired me to think it could be where the great-grandfather's life ended one hundred years ago.

Tell us about your lead character and what lessons he learns

Ben is a rich city kid who is jaded by his parents' divorce and their distraction by their pursuit for personal happiness and professional success. As Ben moves between the flash but empty homes of his parents, even though they provide for him and he knows they love him, he often feels he's their greatest inconvenience. Ben spends a lot of time at home alone, playing computer games.



He is jealous of his cousin, Josh, not only because he is taller, bigger and better at all sports, but mainly because he has something Ben hasn't got – two parents always present in his life and doting on him.

With a negative outlook on life, Ben interprets everything as a slate against him. It's not until he delves into his family's criminal history that his view of himself, his family and his life changes. With his new perspective Ben realises he has all the love and family he's ever needed, and this revelation changes his life entirely.

Do you think readers will relate to Ben?

Although Ben has all the things money can buy, his life lacks true happiness and connection with his parents. His life could almost be described as sterile. Ben's life feels empty, and he is bitter and difficult because of it. The readers will understand Ben, will have sympathy for him, from the opening scene when his father chooses work over his planned holiday with Ben. Ben's mother is on her honeymoon, not to be contacted, so he feels alone, abandoned, unloved, and an inconvenience to his parents' lives.

Then we meet his country relatives – Uncle Ian, Aunt Christine and his same-aged cousin, Josh, who live in a single-storey, older style, ramshackle home full of love, laughter, animals and positive energy.

At first, everything about this scene makes Ben sick. From the family's rescue animals to the parents calling their son 'Josh-man' like he's some kind of superhero. Josh wouldn't know what it's like to have no love or attention.

But it is here, in this uncomfortable environment, that Ben attains everything he needs.

What is the central theme of your story?

This story is about change. The opening words to the novel are:

If your life can change

In one day

One hour

One minute

One second

Imagine what can change

In one week

History shapes our future, but if we take responsibility for our actions – even for wrongs committed generations ago by our ancestors – we can help to make things right.

The historical part of this story is shown, and the dishonest actions of the great-grandfather are contrasted by the honesty of Ben, one hundred years later. This story shows that what we do today can

affect the lives of people well into the future, and that also, those affected by crimes of the past can't change the past, but can take action to correct past wrongdoings.

Why did you want to tell this story?

This is an important story to tell in current times. The lead characters are the age of my children and it holds an important message – they can make a difference, even though they are young.

It reinforces the importance of standing up for what is right, to take action to make things right, even years after an event, especially if they are privileged enough to have the power to do so. I want them to realise they can make change in this world, their actions can improve it.

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

- Look at the cover. What do you think the story will be about? Based on the images, what themes do you think might be a part of the story?
- Analyse elements of the book cover design by Tony Palmer and comment on what makes them effective. Consider colour, font and images in your discussion. Why were these elements chosen? What would you have done differently if you were designing this book cover?
- Read the first chapter of the book. What do these descriptions tell you about Ben as a character and his family relationships? Who does Ben live with? Does he have a big or small family? Write down as many facts and assumptions as you can based on what you learn on these pages – then revisit them after finishing the book. Were you right in your assumptions? Has your view of Ben and his family relationships changed? In a separate column, write down any changes you'd make to your initial list about Ben's character and family relationships.

WRITING STYLE

Seven Days is a novel written in first-person narrative, which means it is written from the point of view of the main character, telling the story from Ben's perspective at all times, revealing only what he knows at that point in time as well as giving the reader front-row access to his inner thoughts and feelings.

Seven Days is also written in the present tense, which makes the action that happens immediate and enables the reader to experience everything alongside Ben, in the moment, as it happens – making for a thrilling read.

Fleur Ferris has carefully crafted the language of *Seven Days*, honing each word and sentence until it perfectly



conveys emotion, action and movement so that every word has the greatest impact possible on the reader. Examples include:

- Fractured sentences to show Ben's confusion
- Stream of consciousness, long sentences to show Ben working things out and analysing
- Short, sharp sentences to depict fast-paced action
- Active vocabulary that gives each description as much power and meaning as possible, allowing the reader to see, hear, touch, taste and smell what Ben does.

Questions and activities

- What are some of the benefits of first-person narration?
- What are its limitations compared, for instance, with an omniscient narrator?
- What other novels do you know that are written with a first-person narration?
- Can you list other types of narrative technique that are used to write fictional stories? First-person narration and omniscient narrator are just two.
- Re-read the end of the chapter called 'Digging for truth' from page 175 to page 177. Can you identify the writing techniques, outlined above, that Fleur uses to add emphasis and edge to the words? Circle examples of each in your text. Are there any other writing techniques that you can identify that Fleur uses in the story?
- Ben describes the poem in his great-grandfather's journal as 'old-person script'. Using the calligraphy letters in the Worksheet below, compose your own handwritten letter or poem and see if a friend can read it or de-code it.

THEMES

Self-perception

Ben begins the book hating himself for who he is – his father's son, no good at sport, skinny and pale, scared of everything. As he delves into the history surrounding his great-grandfather's murder, Ben initially discovers things that seem to support his self-loathing, but as he digs deeper and starts to open up to both himself and his cousin, Ben begins to accept who he is and even starts to see himself through Josh's eyes, as brave and resilient and determined and clever, and realises his fear is actually a sixth sense that keeps him alive. This gives him confidence and drive to be himself, to believe in himself and also to stand up for himself.

Doing the right thing

Ben does lots of things throughout the story that are ethically questionable, such as stealing a look at Queenie Rhinestone's private journal as well as breaking into the zoo, which is a criminal act. But, you could argue, he does them for the right reasons. Is there such a thing as right and wrong? Does a person's intent play a part in what is right and what is wrong? Or is 'truth' in the eye of the beholder? And does the outcome legitimise the means?

Justice

Who determines justice – an individual or the state? Is it possible to justify a criminal action for the greater good?

Inheritance

This theme is one that runs through *Seven Days* as a continuous motif, and one that trickles into every aspect of the story: inheritance of wealth, inheritance of badness and bad deeds, inheritance of reputation, inheritance of name, inheritance of perspective, genetic inheritance and nature versus nurture and self-fulfilling prophecy.

Family

The role of a person's family is another deep-rooted theme in the story – closely linked to the inheritance theme, but very much stand-alone, too. The different characters portray many different perspectives on family, and the different expectations and relationships between family members: Ben's divorced parents and their living separate lives from their son is in stark contrast to Josh's close family life; family and place are also inextricably linked in the story.

Zoophobia

Ben's fear of animals is initially portrayed as a vulnerability, but it soon becomes apparent that his biggest fear reveals his true bravery – something he very much utilises as the story develops, and something that drives the story and action.

City and rural living

The differences between Ben's life in Melbourne and Josh's life in Manibee are contrasted throughout *Seven Days*. While Ben's life in Melbourne is conveyed as a wealthy yet lonely one, and anonymous thanks to the number of people who live in the city, Josh's small-town community is one where people are held accountable due to everyone knowing everyone's business, and Josh's life is mainly portrayed as a healthy one, filled with sport and outdoor activities and a close-knit family that rates relationships and experiences above things. Are these true to life or outdated stereotypes?



KEY STUDY TOPICS

History and place

Manibee, the fictional rural town where the story is set, has a long history of crime. Fleur Ferris says that she used her knowledge of Mansfield in rural Victoria and its ties to the dark history of the Ned Kelly gang in writing this backstory.

Questions and activities

- What is the history of the town or suburb where you live? How has that history shaped the place you live today? For instance, are there any statues of significant people from your town's history? Are any roads named after important figures? And do you know of any families who have lived in the same area for 25, 50 or 100 years, like the Parkers and Rhinestones in *Seven Days*, or even much, much longer, such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are the Traditional Custodians and the first storytellers of the lands on which you live?
- What are the main differences described in the story between living in a big city (such as Melbourne) and living in a rural area. Are there any similarities?

Family and identity

Central to the story is the family history of the Parkers and the Rhinestones – not just their feud, but their common ancestor, Archibald Parker.

Questions and activities

- Can you plot a family tree of the Parkers and Rhinestones based on your knowledge of the families from the book? These quotes from the book will help you:
 - p. 15: *'This is part of your family history. It's your father's father's journal. Your great-grandfather's. He died at the hands of the Rhino Boys ... Three brothers from the Rhinestone family ... They said your great-grandfather ... stole family jewels from their sister.'*
 - p. 15: *'The Rhinestones are a family – many families – who still live here ... I went to school with Maree Rhinestone,' [says Aunt Christine].*
 - p. 42: *Four days later, three brothers, Rodney, David and Steven Rhinestone, were arrested and charged with his murder.*
 - P. 64: *It's Eunice's mother's journal ... I open the front pages and see the name Queenie Rhinestone.*

- p. 217: *'Archibald Parker is my father.'* [explains Eunice Rhinestone]

- On a separate sheet of paper, can you fill in the details of your own family tree? How far back can you go? Are there any family members who can help you fill out more names?
- Re-read pages 79–88. In this scene, Ben takes Josh and Uncle Ian on a tour of his house. Consider the language that Ben uses to describe the house. He takes a lot of pride in showing his cousin and uncle his home, but it is more about the 'stuff' than the 'relationships'. With his mum and dad absent from his everyday life, Ben seeks comfort in his familiar surroundings. Compare and contrast Ben's descriptions of his 'house' in this chapter with those of Josh's 'home' on pages 33–36.
- Write a description of your own house, using as much detail as possible. Which items in your house mean the most to you and say the most about you and/or your family, and how can you describe them to show that?
- This scene on pages 79–88 is also a key turning point in Ben's self-perception and attitude to the people in his family. Generally speaking, we all seek a sense of belonging, approval and validation from the people in our lives. How others see us affects how we see ourselves, and vice versa. Ben and Josh both see each other in certain ways, and they each challenge the other's sense of self. It not only affects how they see each other, but how they see themselves. Can you think of a time when someone has challenged your own perception of yourself? What did it change from and to? Write a descriptive paragraph in first-person narrative about that time, focusing on describing your feelings and what changed, as well as what was said.
- At the beginning of the story, Ben believes his Uncle Ian nicknames him 'Evil' because he thinks he's just that – evil in some way. Throughout *Seven Days*, Ben is constantly questioning the idea of inheriting badness through his genes, and he questions everything about himself, as well as his dad and great-grandfather. Josh helps Ben to see the good in himself. And, despite being different, the two boys have many similarities in character. Write a list of the similarities and differences between Ben's character and Josh's.

Time and changing ethical values

Fleur Ferris has structured the story into seven days, and the concept of 'time' is a continuous motif that Fleur weaves into the story, such as with the great-grandfather's journal from 100 years ago, as well as the story's structure with the chapters being split into each



day of the week, and Ben literally counting down the days until he can go home to Melbourne and unintentionally setting himself a definitive deadline (seven days) for solving the 100-year mystery.

Questions and activities

- Can you think of any other books or stories that use time to structure or mark out the story in this way? *Detention* by Tristan Bancks is one example.
- Can you think of any other books that feature journals or diaries, too? What are the similarities and differences between a first-person narration, such as that of *Seven Days*, and a diary narrative? For instance, a diary is usually written as a private text, not to be read by anyone else, and the writer is in control of what they write. How is this different from a first-person narrative?

Seven Days also explores how the past can catch up with you, how history shapes our future, and how what we do today can affect the lives of people well into the future. Re-read pages 139–142 of *Seven Days* before answering the following questions.

- In this chapter, Ben is trying to sort out his thoughts about doing the right thing. Ben speaks about feeling obliged to do the right thing once he finds out the truth, and that knowing the truth means he is obliged to make that truth known to others so that any wrongdoings can be fixed. In small groups, discuss the following points, which are a summary of Ben's thoughts around obligations, responsibility and doing the right thing. What would your answers be to Ben's questions, and why?
 - 'Is it my obligation to reveal the truth after a century has passed?'
 - 'The obligation comes with the knowing. If I say nothing, am I as bad as my great-grandfather?'
 - 'Am I responsible for anything he [my great-grandfather] did?'
- At the end of p. 139, Josh and Ben allude to the different values of Australian society 100 years ago when Eunice Rhinestone was born:

'She was raised to think certain things. Society was cruel back then.'

'It can be cruel right now, too,' I say.

But Josh is right. Eunice ... was raised in a community that had different beliefs to what we have now. She would have been shamed for many reasons, and none of them were her doing. Being Eunice Rhinestone wouldn't have been easy.

What are the beliefs and values of society 100 years ago that Josh and Ben are referring to here? And how are they different to the beliefs and values of Australian society today?

KEY QUOTES

1. *'Yes, he was rich and respectable. The Rhinestones didn't have the same status. Your great-grandfather was always going to be believed over them,' says Aunt Christine. (p. 34)* Ben's Aunt Christine often feels like the voice of reason in the story. Do you think she suspected that Archibald Parker might not be the upstanding citizen everyone says he was? She was once friends with Maree Rhinestone but that stopped when she became involved with Uncle Ian, a Parker... Would you describe her as a loyal character? What other words would you use to describe Ben's Aunt Christine?
2. *How I feel is hard to describe – as Archibald Parker's great-grandson, I know I am not responsible for what he did or didn't do back then, so why do I feel sick in my chest about it? Was the Rhino Boys' guilt predetermined because my great-grandfather was a Parker and they were Rhinestones? Were the town, the police and the jury already on the Parkers' side before the trial began? (p. 43)* Ben has a very active social conscience that makes him want to do the right thing. What aspects of his own life do you think add to his desire to do the right thing and ensure justice is served?
3. *How do I admit to Josh, who has a perfect father, that I am ashamed of mine? Could he understand my hope that, by going out of my way to do something good as often as Dad goes out of his way to do something bad, I might somehow balance the world? Uncle Ian would understand. He knows Dad, and I can only assume he calls me Evil because he thinks I'm like him. Maybe I am. Maybe we inherit our ancestors' goodness or, in my case, badness. (p. 52)* Ben's thoughts here centre around the idea of inheritance – inheritance of 'bad' genes, and inheritance of 'bad' deeds. Discuss this idea with your class, thinking about the concepts of free choice, and nature versus nurture.
4. *I grab [Josh] by the shoulder. 'Stop. Listen to me.' My voice rises with the anger that has been boiling up inside me. My anger at Dad, at Mum, at having to be here. At Josh for thinking so badly of me. At that stupid, nasty nickname Uncle Ian calls me. At all the animals at this house that want to kill me. (p. 74)* When Ben feels anger, the reasons he gives here are due to hurt. Are there any other instances of anger, in Ben and other characters, that are also caused by hurt? What are some other emotions



- that might lead to anger? And are they character-specific?
5. *The relief of being home and not a burden on anyone is overwhelming.* (p. 76) This statement from Ben is made at his most vulnerable, when he has retreated to his 'safe place' at home, where he feels he belongs thanks to the familiarity of it. Who does Ben feel like he's a burden on? And how does this influence his character arc within the story as well as his actions?
 6. *Always being jealous? What's he talking about? He's called Josh-man. Not Rubber-man because he bounces instead of breaks when he falls off his bike or skateboard, not Fast-man because he can run like the wind, not Football-man because he wins all the trophies, not Tall-man, Fit-man, Strong-man, Broad-man or Skater-man. Simply: Josh-man. Even though he is amazing at everything he tries, it's being Josh, being himself, that gives him superhero status. Obviously, he doesn't mean he is actually jealous of me, apart from when he saw me with Olivia.* (p. 79) Ben and Josh are both jealous of each other for opposite reasons. How does this jealousy eventuate in deepening their friendship, their perception of each other and their self-perception?
 7. *'Boys are allowed to cry.'* (p. 80) Does Uncle Ian saying this somehow give credit to the opposite: that some people think boys might not be allowed to cry? Discuss the idea of society's views of what is gender-appropriate, and how these have changed (or not) over the years / decades / centuries.
 8. *I smirk when I'm uncomfortable, and this occasion is no exception.* (p. 83) A smirk can often come across as arrogant, and yet that isn't an attribute that is obviously associated with the character of Ben. What reasons can you think of for why Ben might smirk when he's uncomfortable? Have you had times when you have made an expression that may have seemed inappropriate for the situation?
 9. *'Are journals still private when the writer is dead?'* (p. 91) Discuss this question with your class.
 10. *She played no part in any of it, yet she has had to live with it for her entire life. It blows my mind to think what we do today matters – not just to us, but to those who come after us, to those who aren't even born yet. It can impact someone one hundred years from now. We all need to do better. We need to do good.* (p. 115) Plot a fictional short story about two characters – one who lived in the past and one who lives today – and how the actions of the character in the past affect the character who is alive today. Will your story reveal a positive or negative impact?
 11. *'You'd have to sit in the exact same place as me to see exactly what I'm seeing, and even then, we only see our individual perception of what's in front of us.'*
I have no idea what he's talking about. Wouldn't we both see what's there? (p. 124) The idea of people having different perceptions of something concrete and physical is one that Ben struggles with. But 'seeing' something is not a passive activity – it requires our brain to process the image that our eyes feed it, and so, with our brain involved, even the most concrete thing we see is still a perception. How do we know that we all see the colour 'green', for instance, in the exact same way? Compare Ben's quote above with the following quotes:
– On p. 144: *The thing about speed is, it's subjective; Josh's definition of real slow is very different to mine.*
– And on p. 147: *'That's coming from behind us,' I whisper.*
'No. It echoes through the valley and bounces off the cliff. It sounds like it's behind us, but it's coming from below us.'
My senses are completely fooled and don't believe a word Josh is saying.
– And on p. 221: *Josh's lived experience is different to mine, so even though we shared the same event, our perception and suffering cannot possibly be the same.*
 12. *Josh lets me talk without interrupting ... It's liberating to be listened to like this. Empowering, even.* (p. 128) Discuss how and why listening is as important as talking in a conversation.
 13. *'You may not ever understand because Uncle Ian is a good person. He doesn't harm people. You've never had to question this about yourself. You've never had to question who you are. I need to prove to myself that I am not like my dad – because I can't go through life hating myself.'* (p. 129) How does the ending turn Ben's statement here on its head? Ben and Josh learn a lot from each other and from their dads through the story. How does each of their self-perceptions change as the story unfolds? And does this prove or disprove Ben's idea of inheriting badness?
 14. *'The truth is not ours to keep, is it?'* (p. 131) Can truth be owned? Is there only one truth? Or can there be different versions of the truth?
 15. *I've never held such a big secret, not ever ... It feels amazing to be trusted.* (p. 144) Josh trusts Ben with his deepest secret. Is it important for their

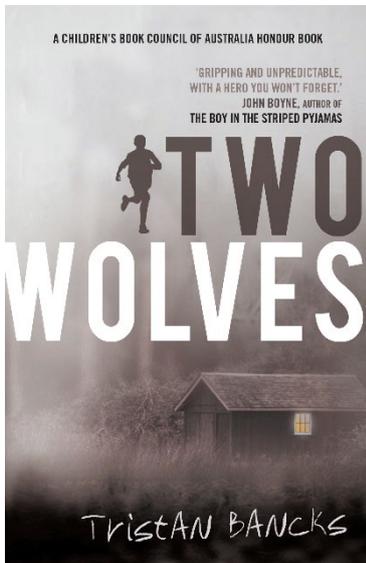


friendship that Ben reciprocates and tells Josh his secrets? Why?

16. *'That's only because you live in a small community where everyone knows everyone. If people thought you were bad, it'd be hard to live here. Dad flies under the radar in Melbourne. He can be anonymous, his friends don't necessarily know his business.'* (pp. 220–21) Ben comments on the differences between city and rural living, and how his dad is able to get away with being bad compared to Josh's dad who had to hide it. Do you agree with Ben's comments? Think about your own experiences in the city and/or country, and think about the differences between the two places. Are there any similarities?
17. *'We are not them,' I say. 'You can't change what any family member has done, you can only try and do what's right from here on.'* *I close my eyes. The responsibility of family wrongdoings is exhausting. I'm sick of it. 'Just live as honestly as possible. Be a good person. Own your mistakes, own what they've done, and, if it's possible, do what's right to help fix any damage.'* (p. 221) How do Ben's comments to Josh here foretell the story's ending?
18. *If I could turn the clock back, I'd do things differently. But that's the thing with time. You can never turn it back.* (p. 225) With Ben spending the entire story counting down to the end of the week, is there irony in the fact that he contemplates going back in time to do things differently? What parts of the story do you think he'd do differently, and why?
19. *'It's ... entitlement that set everything off in the first place. Archibald Parker did whatever he wanted because he knew there would be no consequences ... I broke the rules, I made bad choices, and now I have to own that.'* (p. 228) Think about the idea of 'entitlement' and 'being entitled'. Often, when we take things for granted, we can appear to be entitled. Think about how this might apply to your life, and what attributes we can all nurture to be less entitled. Being grateful, sharing what we have and showing generosity are some examples.



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



Two Wolves
by Tristan Bancks

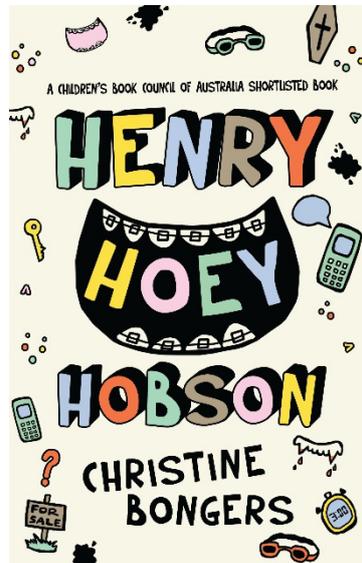
Why this story? Like Fleur's *Seven Days*, Tristan's books *Two Wolves*, *The Fall* and *Detention* also place their protagonists in situations where they need to make tough decisions and face challenging ethical dilemmas.

One afternoon, police officers show up at Ben Silver's front door. Minutes after they leave, his parents arrive home. Ben and his little sister Olive are bundled into the car and told they're going on a holiday. But are they?

It doesn't take long for Ben to realise that his parents are in trouble. Ben's always dreamt of becoming a detective – his dad even calls him 'Cop'. Now Ben gathers evidence and tries to uncover what his parents have done.

The problem is, if he figures it out, what does he do? Tell someone? Or keep the secret and live life on the run?

Teachers' notes available.



Henry Hoey Hobson
by Christine Bongers

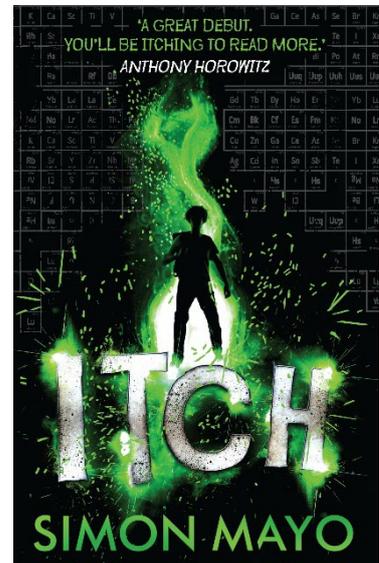
Why this story? Henry Hoey Hobson is a hero to cheer for till your tonsils hang out on strings.

Henry Hoey Hobson arrives at his sixth school, Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, to discover he's the only boy in Year Seven.

Friendless, fatherless and non-Catholic, Henry is not only a Perpetual Sucker, but a bloodsucker, according to his catty classmates.

When he's caught moving a coffin into the creepy house next door, it drives a stake through the heart of his hopes of fitting in.

His only chance to fight back is the school swimming carnival – sink-or-swim time in the treacherous waters of Year Seven.



Itch
by Simon Mayo

Why this story? If you liked the action adventure of *Seven Days*, you'll enjoy this fast-paced story.

Meet Itch – an accidental, accident-prone hero. Science is his weapon. Elements are his gadgets. This is Alex Rider with Geek-Power!

Itchingham Loft – known as Itch – is fourteen, and loves science, especially chemistry. He's also an element-hunter: he's decided to collect all the elements in the periodic table. Which has some interesting and rather destructive results in his bedroom . . .

Then, Itch makes a discovery. A new element, never seen before. At first no one believes him – but soon, someone hears about the strange new rock and wants it for himself. And Itch is in serious danger . . .



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